



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.3447 | FAX (517) 373.5849
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/birkholz/

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
03-25

Contact: Amanda Price
(517) 373-1855

Aquifer Protection Legislation Passes Senate Committee

Senator Birkholz: Senate Bill 289 headed to the full Senate

Thursday, May 1, 2003- Senator Patricia Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, announced today that Senate Bill 289, a bill that would require the Department of Environmental Quality to compile a mapping of groundwater resources in Michigan passed the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs will be heard by the full Senate on Tuesday, May 6, 2003.

“Michigan policymakers have for some time realized the importance of protecting our state aquifers, yet there is no current base of information that allows us to take the appropriate steps to ensure the health of that resource,” said Senator Birkholz, chair of the committee. “We must develop a thorough mapping of our groundwater to determine where our problems may exist and then work from that point.”

In addition to creating this significant mapping and inventory, Senate Bill 289 will require a more consistent water use reporting program, will also create a special limited duration advisory council consisting of representatives of all major impacted user groups to help policymakers chart out the next steps to protect this resource along with helping to implement a new method for resolving conflicts over groundwater use.

“The efforts we have put forth in this bill remind me of the efforts that the state put into protecting our sand dunes through the 1980s and the 1990s. There are many parallels,” Birkholz continued. “In the earlier context, we knew we had a significant resource to protect, but we were not sure of the extent of the resource and where we needed to focus our efforts. We took a methodical, studied approach to protecting our sand dunes and in the end Michigan’s program has been regarded as one of the nation’s finest dune protection programs.”

“I sincerely believe that passage of SB 289 will set this state on its way to developing a similarly successful program for Michigan’s aquifers,” Birkholz stated.

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